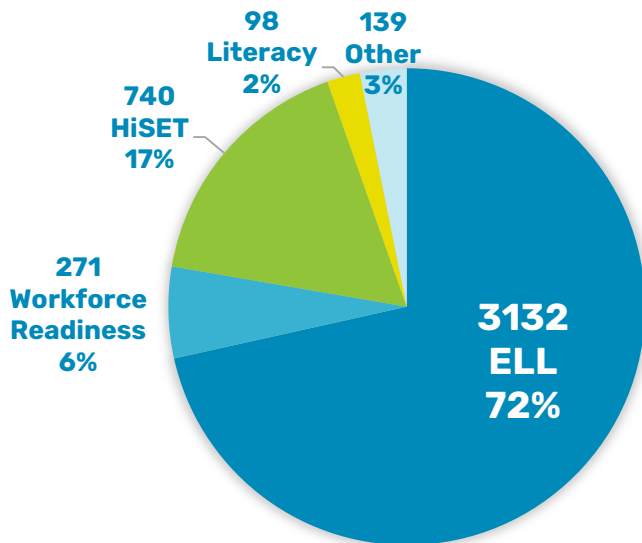


Davidson County’s Immigration Boom: Since 2000, the percentage of Davidson County’s population that was born outside the United States has grown from 2 to 12%. According to Nashville Next, the population is anticipated to be majority-minority by 2040.¹

9.1% of Davidson County’s population 18 and older speaks English “less than very well.”²
 15% of residents 18 or older speak a language other than English at home.³

A Regional Issue: Between 2000 and 2012, the increase in Limited English Proficient (LEP) population was 49-75% in Nashville, Louisville, Birmingham, and Cincinnati.⁴ Demand for English Language Learning (ELL) remains high in our community:

**Current Enrollment in GOAL Partner Organizations
 By Educational Program Type**



**Current Waitlist for
 ELL Programs for
 Adult Learners**

1,582
**Potential
 Learners**

GOAL collects this data quarterly from partners. Data reflected for the period ending 3/31/24.

Nationwide Demand: Other cities face long waitlists and underserved adult learner populations; Boston has only 1/20 of the seats needed to serve their LEP population.⁵ Nationwide, less than 1.4% of working-age immigrants who speak English less than very well are served by government-funded ELL programs.⁶

Alternative pathways for ELL: Tennessee Language Center offers paid ELL classes, but fees can be a deterrent if English is needed to secure learners’ economic stability. Nashville State Community College provides ELL courses to prepare for enrollment in degree programs, with financial aid available. However, undocumented students must pay out-of-state tuition, which can be cost-prohibitive. TIRRC has led an initiative to change this law since 2012.⁷

Productivity Impact of Limited English Proficiency: Among foreign-born who entered the US in 2010 or later and now live in Davidson County, 58.6% are 18-44 years old.⁸ The majority are squarely in the productive years of life—when Americans are typically raising families, working, starting businesses, and completing post-secondary education. In WIOA-funded adult learning programs, 76% of English Language Acquisition learners are 25-54 years of age.⁹

Economic Impact of LEP for Individuals: Nationally, working-age adults with limited English proficiency earn 25 to 40 percent less than counterparts proficient in English. In 11 metro areas, including Nashville, median earnings for the English-proficient working-age population are at least **double** that for the LEP population.¹⁰

Workforce Impact of LEP for the City: Immigrants ameliorate population decline in urban areas and fill labor shortages."¹¹ The Nashville Area Chamber of Commerce's *Welcoming Nashville* report polled 200 community and business leaders, and 67% said that "Increased language training" was "very important" to further immigrant integration—the highest ranked action in the survey.¹²

Wholistic Impact of LEP: Up to 96% of grandchildren of immigrants speak only English at home.¹³ Initially, however, "About half of all immigrants have limited English proficiency, and...half (53%) of immigrants with limited English proficiency say that difficulty speaking or understanding English has ever made it hard for them to do at least one of the following:

- get health care services (31%);
- receive services in stores or restaurants (30%);
- get or keep a job (29%);
- apply for government financial help with food, housing, or health coverage (25%);
- report a crime or get help from the police (22%)...
- communicat[e] with their children's school (24%)."¹⁴

Civic Impact of English Language Learning: In one of the few published studies on the impact of ELL on civic engagement, analysis of a public ESOL program in Framingham (Boston) showed that enrollment in an ELL course more than doubled voter registration rates.¹⁵ This study also proposed that engagement increases not just because of language acquisition, but also because of learners' strengthened social networks and access to resources via the program.

Funding is low for ELL. Among our partners and elsewhere, funding generally comes from:

- WIOA (47% goes to Community- or Faith-based Non-Profits in Tennessee)¹⁶
- Private foundations and individual donors

GOAL's ELL partner programs do not generally receive direct funds from the municipal government, aside from the MNPS Office of English Learners.

A Worthwhile Commitment by All: A Stanford (CA) study found that oral proficiency in English is attained in 3-5 years and academic proficiency in 5-7 years.¹⁷ Studying only one hour a week, it could take up to 15 years to learn English. However, with full immersion, studying English full-time every day, proficiency could be reached in as little as six months.¹⁸ The Framingham ESOL study found that increases in reported income for ELL participants would translate to increased tax revenues; the social return on investment for ELL programs over the working lives of participants was calculated to be 6%—surpassing 5% returns on equity funds, and of much deeper and long-lasting impact on the learners served and on successive generations.¹⁹

ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNING

Demand & Value in Davidson County



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³ U.S. Census Bureau. (2022b). *Characteristics of People by Language Spoken at Home*. 2022: ACS 1-Year Estimates Subject Tables. https://data.census.gov/table/ACSST1Y2022.S1603?t=Language+Spoken+at+Home&g=040XX00US47_050XX00US47037

⁴ Wilson, J. H. (2014, September 24). *Investing in English Skills: The Limited English Proficient Workforce in U.S. Metropolitan Areas*. https://www.brookings.edu/wp-content/uploads/2014/09/metro_20140924_investing_in_english_skills_report.pdf

⁵ Modestino, A. S., Dopkins, L., & Santelices, C. (2020, February 6). *The ROI OF ESOL: The Economic and Social Return on Investment for ESOL Programs in Greater Boston*. https://www.tbf.org/-/media/tbf/reports-and-covers/2020/roi-of-esol_20200206.pdf

⁶ *Digest of Education Statistics*, 2022. National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) Home Page, a part of the U.S. Department of Education. (2023, April). https://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d22/tables/dt22_507.20.asp

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⁷ *Education*. Tennessee Immigrant & Refugee Rights Coalition. <https://www.tnimmigrant.org/education>

⁸ U.S. Census Bureau. (2022c). *Selected Characteristics of the Foreign-Born Population by Period of Entry Into the United States*. 2022: ACS 1-Year Estimates Subject Tables. https://data.census.gov/table/ACSST1Y2022.S0502?t=Native+and+Foreign+Born&g=040XX00US47_050XX00US47037

⁹ *Table 3: Participants by program type and age*. National Reporting System. (2023). <https://nrs.ed.gov/rt/tn/2022/table-3>

¹⁰ Wilson, J. H. (2014, September 24). *Investing in English Skills: The Limited English Proficient Workforce in U.S. Metropolitan Areas*. https://www.brookings.edu/wp-content/uploads/2014/09/metro_20140924_investing_in_english_skills_report.pdf

¹¹ Bier, D. J. (2023, September 13). *Unlocking America's Potential: How Immigration Fuels Economic Growth and Our Competitive Advantage*. Cato.org. <https://www.cato.org/testimony/unlocking-americas-potential-how-immigration-fuels-economic-growth-our-competitive>

¹² Nashville Area Chamber of Commerce Research Center. (2021, July). *Welcoming Nashville: Perspectives and Trends. Welcoming America*. <https://welcomingamerica.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/Welcoming-Nashville-Perspective-and-Trends.pdf>

¹³ Hill, L. (2021, November 8). *English Proficiency of Immigrants*. Public Policy Institute of California. <https://www.ppic.org/publication/english-proficiency-of-immigrants/>

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¹⁶ *Table 14: Local Grantees by Funding Source*. National Reporting System. (2023). <https://nrs.ed.gov/rt/tn/2022/table-14>

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¹⁹ Heller, B. H., & Mumma, K. S. (2023). *Immigrant Integration in the United States: The role of adult English language training*. *American Economic Journal: Economic Policy*, 15(3), 407–437. <https://doi.org/10.1257/pol.20210336>. <https://pubs.aeaweb.org/doi/pdfplus/10.1257/pol.20210336>